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SUBJECT: NATIONAL EDUCATION FORUM IN DJIBOUTI

11. (U) Djibouti's Ministry of Education hosted February 5-6 at the People's Palace a formal review of its education reform program, which began in 1999. Funded in part by USAID, under the Economic Support Funds (ESF) program, the formal review was an outgrowth of district stakeholders meetings by Minister of Education Abdi Ibrahim Absieh and a team of advisors on the country's education reform program achievements. The review also solicited feedback from parents, teachers, school directors, non-governmental organizations and others. The results of the consultations and feedback will form the basis for Djibouti's Strategy and Action Plan, which USAID will help develop, for the next phase of education reform in Djibouti.

12. (U) During the formal review program, the main themes of educational reform were presented: (1) increasing access to equity in basic education services; (2) improving the quality of teaching and learning; (3) strengthening the capacity of educational institutions; and (4) diversifying and justifying financial resources in support of education. Along with each theme, a list of achievements for the academic years 1999-2005 was presented, as well as a list of ongoing weaknesses or deficiencies. A major achievement, in the Ministry's view, was an increase in the national primary school enrollment rate from 39 percent in 1999 to 53 percent in the 2004-05 academic period. Other achievements, as well as shortcomings, will be explored in separate communication with REDSO and USAID headquarters.

13. (U) Nearly 200 stakeholders (parents and civil society organization representatives) from throughout the districts were sponsored by USAID to attend the two-day event. They were joined by donor community members and Ministry of Education officials and staff. The closing session of the event was presided over by President Ismail Omar Guelleh and Prime Minister Dileita Mohamed Dileita and attended by ministers and members of the diplomatic community, including Ambassador and USAID Director.
RAGSDALE